

Benefits of Abiding in Christ

December 10, 2017

1 John 2:28-3:3

I'm not alone, I think when I acknowledge how challenging looking back on the Sermon on the Mount, how challenging that teaching proved to be. It's very convicting, I think, to concentrate so intently on Jesus' preaching, his sermon, and for months on end, I look back, I think we started that series on the Sermon on the Mount in May. I found his words, I personally found his words to be searching, provoking, calling all of us to examine ourselves and to confess our sins, particularly in our lack of love, as we think about the love that God requires of us is to love our enemies, to love those who are unlovely and unlovable. That's the kind of love he showed toward us when he sent his son Jesus Christ to die for our sins.

And so Jesus calls us to love like that, to repent, to follow him in obedience. So I think we all, as a church, felt

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the need to commit to him really all over again, to follow him in devotion and obedience. I said at the beginning of that study that our church after this teaching will never be the same. And I think that that is very true. Our Lord has certainly changed us just in those few months. And I know he has more coming.

Now as we enter into the Christmas season, Gary Brotherton and I, Gary's going to be preaching next Sunday, we thought it would be appropriate, helpful, encouraging, to stir up our collective, our corporate devotion to God by reminding all of us about our sure and firm standing in Christ. So if you are a Christian with a sensitive conscience and the last few weeks or months or whatever it's been, has been, a convicting time. Maybe a disconcerting time for you, I hope that this next two weeks for you is encouraging to strengthen your confidence, to increase your joy.

Turn in your Bibles, with that in mind, to the epistle of 1 John. 1 John. We're going to look at that encouraging portion at the very end of the second chapter, going into the third chapter, the beginning there. So starting in 1 John 2:28. As you

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know, if you've read the little epistle of 1 John, it's a black-and-white letter, isn't it? It's full of contrast like light and darkness, love and hatred, truth and lies, righteousness and sin. It's antithetical language and John, in that little epistle, is setting forth tests of genuine faith. Tests of genuine faith.

And because of the antithetical language in 1 John and its testing nature, some have spoken of and presented 1 John as being polemical in tone, that is, it's making a polemical argument. John is calling for Christian discernment. And because of that, he's got to be critical. He's got to go on the attack against false pseudo-Christianity. He's sifting tares from wheat. He's calling readers to make sure that they are not fake Christians.

And all of that is there for sure. But I'd like to advocate for reading John's epistle not primarily or fundamentally a polemic against false Christianity, but rather as a pastoral letter. False Christians, by God's grace, as they read through 1 John or hear it preached, they will hear in that letter a

polemical, a, a confrontational tone. And by God's grace false Christians will find conviction by the Spirit unto true salvation. That's what we hope.

But for genuine believers, I think we need to see 1 John instead and read it instead as, really as warmly pastoral because that's what it is. It is a pastoral letter and it's saturated with tender shepherding language. John, as we read through 1 John, is like, he's like an older brother. Or he's like a beloved father-figure to us. He's addressing his readers as beloved often and as, my little children, and language like that that's tender and personal and familial.

He uses often the first-person plural, that is to say, he uses we and our and us. He writes to us as if he's walking with us through this life. But he's also walking ahead of us. And so he is like a brother to us, maybe like an older brother, but really more like a spiritual father. So it's as if as you read 1 John, think of John gathering, like a good shepherd, gathering the sheep around him. Then he brings us close in. He's bringing us into, you might see in a cold field at night the shepherd

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bringing the sheep into that sheepfold and inside the warmth of that shepherding huddle.

And yes, he needs to warn us sheep about the threats that are out there. But it's for the purpose of promoting our health and our growth. It's to promote our safety and our security, our stability, and our confidence. So John speaks to us as a shepherd to sheep. He wants us to grow strong in the things that will give us assurance, that will give us confidence and joy. In fact, he begins the letter stating his purpose, "We are writing these things to you so that our joy," or as some manuscripts read, "your joy may be complete." May be perfected.

He also ends the letter this way. He says, "We," again that first-person plural. "We are in him who is true; and in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children," and again the final word, "little children keep yourselves from idols." It's a word of warning, but it's a word of warning that's endearing to little children. So from start to finish in this letter, John writes as, as a pastor. He writes as a faithful shepherd. He loves these people dearly and so he's

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writing to them with warmth and tenderness, but he does speak in a clear, straightforward manner about serious matters. He intends to keep these little children close to Jesus Christ, to keep them continuing abiding in him so that they might know all the joy and all the confidence of the true grace of God.

So with that in mind, let's read these verses that we're going to cover in our exposition this morning. Starting in verse 28, "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we, we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

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You see back in verse 28 that little word, abide, that command abide? It's a vital word there of command. To abide in Christ. A synonym for that, remain in him, stand fast, stay put, don't go anywhere. The tense of the command there indicates that they need to keep on abiding in the Gospel of Christ, to keep on remaining in him, steadfast in him, faithful to the very, very end.

That's in contrast to phony Christians, all the false professors of Christianity that come in and out of the church. They are the ones who, well they hang around for a time, and sometimes they hang around for many, many years. But their false motives, their lack of genuine faith is eventually exposed by really an anti-Christ spirit. It's either false doctrine or it's enticement to some kind of a sinful habit of thinking or living. That's the anti-Christ spirit that draws all the false professors away and makes them stand apart from the truth. They don't, they don't stay. Maybe they sit in the same seat, but they don't stay in their hearts. They're gone. They depart. They go away.

So how can true Christians avoid the influence of the false? How can they discern carefully, especially when they face, really, a supernatural anti-Christ spirit? How can they stand up to really skillful false teachers, who are trained in greed, practiced in spiritual deception? How do they stand firm against people like that? Same warning Jesus gave at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, right? "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit, right? So watch out who you are following."

So how can the sheep, just being sheep, how can they find safety from the wolves? Look back at verse 24 in 1 John 2. Verse 24 and following, "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you receive from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him." Stay put. Stand fast. Be firm. Fixed. Don't go anywhere.

So how do we stay safe and strong? How do we discern danger? How do we avoid error? How do we grow healthy and mature? Well, let Christ's teaching, which you heard from the beginning, let that teaching, that word, that truth, abide you. If his teaching abides in you, then you will, as a matter of course, abide in the Son and in the Father, which is manifest in your habitual pursuit of truth and your practice of love and obedience. In other words, to stay safe and strong, to grow in wisdom and discernment and maturity, stay close to the shepherd. Stay close to him. He will make us, as we read earlier, he will make us lie down in green pastures, he will lead us and guide us safely beside still waters. Simply abide. Simply keep your eye on him and follow him.

So that's where I want to direct our attention this morning as we look to 1 John 2:28-3:3. Really, to the benefits of abiding in Christ, to the benefits of standing firm, staying fixed, following him. We're going to see six benefits of abiding in Christ this morning and I hope that seeing the benefits of abiding in Christ, that you will be encouraged to stay put, that

you'll be encouraged to stand firm in him. Okay? That's where we want to be.

First benefit of abiding in Christ: Abiding in Christ, it should be the outline, the outline should be your bulletin. You'll write things in there. Should be some blanks for you to fill in. But abiding in Christ means continual vivification, continual vivification. Vivification. V-I-V-I-F-I-C-A-T-I-O-N. Vivification. It's not a word we use often. But it's a great word. It's a really really good word because it means to make alive. It means to, to give life to, to animate, to energize.

Back in verses 24-25, I'm going to make this point by transgressing the boundaries of our verse. Versification here. So our verse range, but so, I know you'll forgive me for that because you're Christians. So we're going to transgress the boundaries of the verse range. Go back to 24 and 25 and start with this as a foundational first point, okay. Look at verse 24, "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise he made to

us—eternal life.” Or I could say, “This is the promise he made to us—continual vivification.” Put simply, remaining in him, abiding in him means eternal life.

We tend to think of eternal simply as a word that refers to quantity that’s never-ending, there is no end to it. But it is not, eternal is not a word in Scripture that refers only to quantity of life, more importantly and most fundamentally, eternal, is a word that refers to quality of life, kind of life. It’s an eternal kind of life. And so by abiding in Christ and remaining in his word, his word remaining in us and us remaining in his word, the Gospel you have heard from the beginning, you partake of that promise that he made to you that this eternal kind of life, the very energy of God himself will be in you.

Look back at chapter 1. Look at the way that John opened his epistle. He said, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard.” This is John speaking as an Apostle and an eyewitness of Christ, right. And so he says, “That which is from the beginning, which we have heard.” He’s not talking about just visions in the night. He’s talking about, he literally heard

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Jesus speak to him. The sound waves hit his auditory nerves, processed in his brain, and he thought through the teaching.

“That which is from the beginning, which we’ve heard, which we’ve seen with our eyes.” John saw him, spent time with him. “Which we looked upon.” We observed. We watched. We saw his, his days begin and his days end. We saw him get tired, take naps, eat food. We saw him do everything. So “Which we’ve looked upon and we’ve touched with our hands.” I always think of John the Apostle, he called himself in his Gospel, he didn’t even use his own name. He said, I’ve got a better title for myself; I’m the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And he talks about leaning his head back at the mealtime on Jesus’ chest. That close, that intimate. Yeah, “touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.” What does it say in verse 2? “The life was made manifest, and we’ve seen it. We’ve looked upon it. We testified to it and we proclaim to you,” what? “The eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.” Listen, that life, that eternal life, which was with the

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Father, that's the energy and the life that called the entire universe into being.

It's the very life that was made manifest in the flesh in Jesus Christ. That is the life that John and the other apostles saw and heard and listened to and touched and knew intimately and personally. That's the life they proclaim to us. It's no phantom. It's no imagination. It's no mystical vision. It's real. A life, the power that created and sustains the universe, the world in which we live and move and have our being, it's the very same life and power that can and must energize us as well.

We have just a few minutes to make each our six points this morning. And I'm really trying to do better on time frame, okay. So, let's not waste any time. Turn over to John 15. John 15. I want to show you something about abiding Christ. You're familiar with this passage, John 15:1-5. And I want to just illustrate this for you. Jesus said this. He's teaching his disciples, and this is the night that he was betrayed.

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In the Upper Room, he says, or as they left the Upper Room, he says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he," that is the Father, the vinedresser, "he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I've spoken to you Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

When God created the world, he created the plant kingdom before he created the animal kingdom, and before creating mankind, as well, the crowning jewel of his creation, the man, man, and woman who would bear his own image. He demonstrated it in plant life for the instruction and reflection of mankind, he demonstrated in plant life the principle of fecundity, or fruit bearing. We've talked about that a few weeks ago, right? Same principle here again in John 15 in this word picture about the vine and the branches.

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In order for a branch to of a grapevine to bear fruit, it has to remain attached to the vine. No vital attachment, no life flowing through it, and therefore, no fruit. A fruitless branch is worthless to the vinedresser. It may bear leaves, but if it bears no grapes, it's just sucking up energy. It's not doing anything. So whatever its appearance is, if the branch is not bearing fruit, that, that is proof that there is some hidden malformation, some, something wrong with that branch, something preventing real and vital attachment. There is no true organic connection between branch and vine. So vinedresser cuts off that fruitless branch. He casts is away, throws it away that it might be swept up and throw into the fire and burned because he, the vinedresser, he needs to focus on pruning. He needs to focus on shaping his vine, his branches, strengthening true branches, the one that have a real and vital attachment to the lifegiving nutrients of a lifegiving vine.

Same thing with those who abide in Christ. They remain attached to him. And they find his lifegiving power flowing out of him, the vine, and into us, the branches, because there's an organic connection there, that we might manifest, produce the fruit coming from that lifegiving power. Fruit that glorifies

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God as it says in John 15:8, "By this, my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

Melinda and I and the family drove up through Napa Valley in California and drove through all the vineyards and everything out there. I don't think there's any farmer, any vinedresser out there who would take pride in a scraggly bunch of weeds without any fruit on it, right? The ones who take pride in their grapevines and their vineyards are the ones who bear much fruit. Because much fruit on that vineyard, in that vineyard, coming from that vineyard producing wine and grape juice and grapes and everything for the stores, they're the ones who are good vinedressers. They're the ones who are making good use of the nutrients, the soil, the land. Very expensive in California.

And in the same way, the father is glorified when his vineyard produces much fruit. Remaining in Christ, it means eternal kind of life. It means continuous stream of spiritual vitality and energy flowing through your life. Turn back to 1 John now. Because everything else that we're going to say from here on out in 1 John, it's going to flow out of this promise of

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Jesus Christ. This is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever, whoever believes in him would not perish,” yes, but what? Not perishing, forgiveness of sins. That’s just the beginning of the relationship. Not perish, but what? “Have eternal life.” That’s the start. That’s the life that flows in and through us when we abide in him. That’s the first benefit of abiding in Christ, continual vivification.

Here’s a second benefit: Abiding in Christ means relational conviction. Write in the word conviction. Abiding in Christ means relational conviction. Or we could call it this, we could call it relational certainty, or relational security, relational assurance. Take your pick. But conviction, action flows with the alliteration, so I’d write that one in, okay. Well, we’re looking at verse 28, which now is within our verse range. “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming.” “Abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming.”

There are two phrases in that verse that make it very plain that John is talking about the Second Coming. It's "When he appears," on the first, and secondly, "At his coming." Those two phrases. And John obviously is not here providing us a formal treatment of the Second Coming. He doesn't really need to because he treats the Second Coming as a cardinal doctrine of the Christian church, one that he can safely assume that all his readers, his believing readers, can and have embraced.

So he points, he assumes the doctrine of the Second Coming and then he points to an implication of the reality of the Second Coming. That is to say, it is both the basis of our relational assurance and a key motivation for holy living. That is this: That we do not want to be ashamed at his return.

I still remember fairly vividly when I returned from the Persian Gulf War in the early '90s as a young man, I had the, the privilege of witnessing many joyful homecomings. As sailors and marines came to the pier, their ships pulled up to the pier and they embraced loved ones and family members, who met them with excitement and joy as the ship pulled into the pier and the

gang planks went down to the pier. See those families embrace after so long of being apart and to see little kids, some of them trembling with excitement. I don't know if you've ever seen that, little kids just shaking because they're so excited like electricity is flowing through them, their little bodies. And they hug their, their daddies, and they wrap their arms around their neck again.

I also saw one very sad scene. As a wife greeted her husband, he was a man that we all knew. She was standing at the pier dressed up, but not like she was going to church, more like an eye-catching outfit and high heels like she was about to go to a nightclub. She met her husband at the pier. The greeting was not warm. It was kind of awkward and frankly, ashamed. It was later revealed she had been unfaithful to him. They soon divorced. We didn't need to know that, though, to see visibly that something was terribly wrong. She was clearly and obviously ashamed at his coming.

Listen, that's why John has written us, written this to us, so that we might not be like that when Christ returns. But

rather, that we might be like little children, wildly excited about daddy's return after a prolonged time away. That is why the doctrine of the Second Coming is so precious. Because it points us to our hope of finally seeing our Savior, of being in the physical presence of the one who died for us, who lives for us, who sent his Holy Spirit to reside in each one of us that he might teach us, that he might guide us into all truth.

This is the one who has been interceding for us right now causing us to grow and to mature. He is the one that we love, and we rejoice in. As Peter said, 1 Peter 1:8, "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him you believe in him and you rejoice with joy that's inexpressible and filled with glory." Look, the doctrine of the Second Coming, it's not about millennial charts and dispensational timelines. As much as I love to study all those things myself, It's, it's more about devotion to Christ. It's about anticipating the full consummation of our eternal hope in him.

The Second Coming provides the devotional, the ethical motivation that we need that we might never grow weary, but to

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keep on abiding in Christ. This temporal life with all of its struggle, sins and distractions and challenges, this is not all there is. There will come a day when our adoption is complete, when we see our Savior and our beloved Lord.

And so we want to abide in Christ in such a way that when he shows up again, when might that be, today, tomorrow, next week, next year, several years, only the Father knows the day and the hour. But we live in a constant state of expectation knowing that this might be the day. *Maranatha*, right? So we want to abide in Christ in such a way that when he shows up again, we'll rejoice at his presence without any shame at all. Because we're confident in the intimacy of that relationship we have pursued every single day of our lives.

Again, look at verse 28, "We must abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming." When John says, "We may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame," he's really saying the same thing in two different ways. The repetition there is a Hebrew

way of reinforcing certainty. You find that in the poetic and wisdom literature. You especially see it in the Proverbs.

Speaks first about the reassurance that comes from that relational security, that is that we may have confidence. And then likewise, he speaks of the relief that comes from relational security, that is that we will not shrink from him in shame. So reassurance and relief both are here in this verse. Full confidence. No shame. The idea of having no shame in his presence, this verb is *aischyno*, it's, to, to be ashamed, or to feel ashamed. But here in the passive voice in this verse, it refers to being put to shame. It refers to being disgraced.

Listen, when Christ returns again, for anybody who is a Christian who's not been walking faithfully but, giving themselves to all kinds of temporal and useless pursuits, he won't need to say a thing. It's just going to be the pure holiness of his presence. It's going to the loving and yet piercing gaze of his eyes, which can see straight through us. One look from him will cut through all of our excuses, all of our reasons, all of our justifications for why we didn't do as

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we should have, why didn't obey him, why we did thus, not such, why we didn't evangelize, why we didn't take discipling interest in other people, why we said, Oh, I don't want to actually address that, it's too difficult.

One look from him, cut right through all of our muddled thinking, all of our confusion, all of our compromises with sin and we will be put to shame. We will be disgraced, and he won't need to say a word. Remember Peter when in a moment of unbelieving cowardice he denied even knowing the Lord. It said in verse 61 of Luke 22 that the Lord turned at that moment when Peter denied him the third time. The rooster crowed and it says that the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Peter immediately remembered the saying of the Lord. Instant clarity, right?

"He remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.' And Peter went out and he and wept bitterly." You know who else was there that day to witness that scene? The Apostle John was there. He's the one who gained entrance for Peter, allowing him to be there in the courtyard of the High Priest in

the first place. John had to have seen his dear friend reduced to bitter tears weeping by just one look from the Lord. Peter's put to shame.

John doesn't want that for us. He wants us to abide in Christ so that we never have that experience, we never feel that kind of shame. He's encouraging us, dear little children, abide in Christ so that we're relationally secure. And in fact, we're bold and confident at his coming. The word for, confidence, there is *parresia, parresia*. It refers to an attitude of, of openness before somebody else. It's an attitude that has no fear whatsoever because there's absolute freedom and security within that relationship.

Have you ever felt the experience of kind of not knowing somebody, you kind of feel guarded in their presence, kind of ill at ease like you can't really be yourself? You've got to kind of watch your words, watch your step, watch your behavior. You know? Usually becomes, comes because of a lack of familiarity with the person. Once you get to know them, kind of the ice melts a little bit and you kind of grow, grow in warmth

and friendship. That's what needs to happen. You need to have a close familiarity. There needs to be a deeper intimacy with the person so you can feel like you can be yourself, you can feel secure in the relationship.

It's like, it's like little kids, think of parents with their kids, or especially, I love seeing it with grandparents with their grandchildren. Love seeing that. It's like little kids who are wiggling and giggling, and they have absolutely no sense of inhibition in the presence of Mommy and Daddy, or in the presence of Grandpa and Grandma.

Listen, that's the way it's got to be for us with Christ. By practicing close intimacy with Christ, by abiding in him, we can have that same confidence, that same lack of inhibition, uninhibited before him. The same sense of relational security and freedom and convictions that when he returns, we may have confidence, never shrinking back from him in shame, but literally running into his presence and into his embrace. That is what John wants for every single believer. And by the way, the author of 1 John is ultimately the Holy Spirit of God, isn't

it? So abiding in Christ means continual vivification, which keeps us pursuing him and produces within us a relational conviction. The ice thaws, we get to know him.

Third benefit of abiding in Christ: Abiding in Christ means spiritual regeneration. It means spiritual regeneration. Not, not that we earn or gain spiritual regeneration by abiding in Christ, but that actually approves it. You might say the evidence or the proof of spiritual regeneration is found in abiding in Christ. Look at verse 29. "If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him." So again, back to the principle of vivification, the principle of life-giving. The eternal life of God produces in the believer what? The fruit of righteousness, which is proof-positive of spiritual life because it only comes as a result of being born again, of the new birth. The practice of righteousness is basically synonymous with abiding in Christ. Those who practice righteousness demonstrate that they are indeed born again.

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Two Greek words for, knowing, are used in verse 29, *oida* and *ginosko*. They can be synonyms, but here used together, this isn't just stylistic variation on John's part. He's making a distinction between these two words. The first time John's speaks of what we know, it's the verb *oida*. He says, "You know that he is righteous." That is a settled fact of history. It's a matter of biblical record that he is righteous. We know that Jesus Christ is righteous just by reading the account of his life, by reading what he said, observing what he did, what he didn't do. It's on the basis of his righteous life that he became the only acceptable sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God, which is justly deserved for our sins.

Now, I want you to listen carefully. I'm going to speak in some theological language about this and if you get the theology of this, you're going to get the benefit of strong unbreakable confidence and assurance about your salvation. So listen. It's only because Jesus Christ is perfectly righteous. That is to say, not one deviation from the righteous standard of God's eternal holiness. That is the only way that he could be the substitute for the sins of all those who believe, to take our

sins upon himself to receive in his own body on the cross the just punishment that we deserved.

And it's only because of his perfect righteousness that God accepted that sacrifice as our atonement, our covering as the perfect and eternal covering for our sins. God punished Christ instead of us. And he accepted that sacrifice as payment for our sins. And it's only because of his perfect righteousness that God raised Jesus from the dead, which is the hope of resurrection that we all have. That one day we too will rise from the dead just as he did, the resurrection. That is also predicated based on the perfect righteousness of Christ.

And it's only because of his perfect righteousness that he is able to act as our advocate. He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And Jesus, there, intercedes for each one of us by name according to the will of God. "We have," 1 John 2:1, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous who is the propitiation for our sins." You know what he's praying about? You know the content of his prayers for us? He's praying that we will abide in him. He's praying that we,

too, might walk in righteousness, that we might walk in holiness in a way that pleases the Father just as he himself did.

So this is the, this is the result of all this magnificent theological truth, folks, when we practice righteousness, when we live and think and talk and plan and long for and pursue righteous obedience to the truth. We can have confidence that we have been spiritually reborn. "For," John 1:12, "to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Our actions, then, prove our parentage. Those who practice righteousness, departing from sin, repenting of sin, living in obedience to the holiness of God, they are those who have new affections, love of truth and righteousness, hatred of error and sin because they have been born again. They're new creatures in Christ. So abiding Christ means spiritual regeneration. You walk in righteousness, which is the evidence of a new nature being born again. And if you're born again, beloved, according to what

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John has written in the Gospel and his letters, spiritual regeneration, it's everything. It's absolutely everything.

Here's just a sampling of what John wrote on the theme of being born again. "Those who are born again," and only they, by the way, "those who are born again, are able to see and enter the kingdom of God. John 3:3 and 5. Those who are born again are born from above they're born by the spirit of God and they possess a brand-new nature. John 3:6. Those who are born again do not continue sinning. 1 John 3:9. "For God seed abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning because he's been born of God."

Oh, beloved, isn't that welcomed news? Those who are born again practice divine love. 1 John 4:7, "For love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God." Those who are born again continue believing. 1 John 5:1. Because "everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ," again, "has been born of God." Not only that, but those who have been born again, they also love everyone else who's been born again. 1 John 5:1.

And those who are born again are never overcome by the world. "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world." 1 John 5:4, And finally, those who are born again, 1 John 5:18, they escape the power of sin and the devil. "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him." Abiding in Christ, it means spiritual regeneration, folks. And spiritual regeneration means everything.

Fourth benefit of abiding in Christ, number four, abiding in Christ means familial identification. Familial identification. Notice 1 John 3:1, that word, see, that word, see there is really a, the way it's written in Greek is a, is an exclamation. It could be written, "Behold, take note of, check this out." It's a, it's an exclamation of awe, of joy. And then when it's combined with the, this, what it's Greek, it's an interrogative adjective. It's, it's the word, what kind of. Or even often the phrase is, What country, like, where'd this come from. This is really the idea. It indicates that we are here, see, where did this come from?

John says we're to reflect here on something that is great, something glorious, something other-worldly wonderful. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him." And then the first part of verse 2, "Beloved, we are God's children now."

Incredible truths. Not only are we called the children of God but we are in fact the children of God. John says the same thing repeatedly, which means we're to take his point emphatically. We are God's children.

I love it that John here again uses the first-person plural. He inserts himself in there. He is not about to be left out and excluded from this number. He includes himself among the number who are God's children. It's not, See what kind of the love the Father has given you that you should be called the children of God, but rather it's, "we have received the Father's love, we are called the children of God; and so we are." He's not going to miss out on this incredible truth of belonging to God's family.

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Now breaking that down just a little bit, first, I want you to notice three things here. First, this love, that we're to behold, that we're to take hold of, say, Where did this come from? This love is an electing reconciling love. It's an electing reconciling love. "See what kind of love the Father has given," not to everyone, but to us. That is to say, it's one kind of love and not another kind of love. This love goes beyond the general love of God, which is manifest in his common grace to all of mankind. His kindness to the ungrateful and the evil, Luke 6:35.

John is talking here about the special electing love of God manifest in his particular, his redeeming grace for his chosen people. It's a love that reconciled, that restored and made a relationship, which has made us, not everyone, but has made us to be his children. You ever stop and think of the fact that you are the elect of God from before the foundation of the world? And if you're rightly struck by that doctrine, you say, Why me? Why me?

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I can answer the question. It's for the glory of his grace. He wanted to demonstrate how glorious his grace is, how patient he is with mankind, which means if he elected us, we're pretty bad stuff, aren't we? He wanted to demonstrate how great his electing, powerful, reconciling love is. So he chose us.

Second thing here: it's a justifying adopting love, kind of love. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God." Look, we're called children of God. God has declared us children, which means he's declared us righteous, which is a judicial act that's called, justification. God calls a thing what it is. He declares it to be so, and then he makes it so. That's how God created the world, right? He decreed it to be, and then he made it to be. That's how God justified us: declaring us to be, and then making us to be. "Let there be, and it was."

So God declared us to be his children and, on that basis, having been justified he adopted us into his family. His electing reconciling love allowed for his justifying love, which is the basis of his adopting love. He's called us children,

adopting us into his family, a family of redeemed people that gives continual praise and glory to his grace.

And thirdly, it's a certain secure kind of love. Certain and secure kind of love. He's called us the children of God, and therefore, we are children of God. And by stating it that way, John is here directing us to the certainty of God's Word. Trust his calling. Trust what he said. The assurance we find comes in resting wholly and completely in his Word. John wants our hope not to be fixed on our feelings, which change from day to day, or really, frankly, from hour to hour. He wants our hope fixed instead on the certainty of his promise, which is grounded in his unchanging character, which speaks an unchanging word.

Listen, that puts the ground of assurance outside of ourselves, right? I am so thankful for that, aren't you? It's utterly hopeless to look inside of our ourselves for spiritual assurance. Think about Paul, the great Apostle Paul and he said in Romans 7, "Wretched man that I am." Look, when we, when look inside of ourselves, if you just look into the holy mirror of Scripture and take God's holiness seriously and then you look

inside yourself, you're going to cry out with the Apostle Paul, Oh, wretched man that I am, wretched woman that I am. "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" The answer follows directly and immediately after, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So the Apostle John joins here, he here joins the Apostle Paul in the same kind of gratitude, recognizing the surety and the certainty of our familial identification that is grounded outside of ourselves and in the Word of God. We are eternally secure in the electing, reconciling, justifying, adopting love of God. Amen.

Two more points. We've seen that abiding in Christ means continual vivification, relational conviction, spiritual regeneration, familial identification. Here's a fifth benefit of abiding in Christ, number five, abiding in Christ means inevitable glorification. I love that word, inevitable glorification. Inevitable. That is 1 John 3:2, "Beloved we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because

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we shall see him as he is." This acknowledges what we all know. We are not yet in fact what we shall be. It reminds us of the great hope we have in our inevitable glorification.

I am so grateful for that, aren't you? I mean, if, if my current state of transformation is all the power that the Gospel has to transform, I am sunk. I am hopeless. In fact, it seems that the more I grow, the more I see the need to grow. The more I understand about sin, the more I see how deeply it is within. The more familiar I become with the Holy character of God, the more aware I am of how far short I have fallen from the perfection of his holiness, again, "wretched man that I am, who will deliver from the body of this death?" Oh yeah, Christ. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And John echoes the same thing here and even explains it a little bit further. He says, We know. That word *oida* again, pointing to facts we believe. It's a Gospel that promises future glorification. When does it happen? "When he appears," next phrase. It happens at the Second Coming. Again, we go back and remember the Apostle Paul who said, Philipians 3:20, "Our

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citizenship is in heaven, and from it, from heaven, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

So when Christ returns for us, he will transform us. Gone will be this lowly body, laden with sin nature. Forgotten will be the daily fight with the presence of sin, the habits of, of a fleshly mind. And in its place will be a new body like his glorious body, which bears "the image of the man of heaven," 1 Corinthians 15:49. God will give us a new body just as he has chosen, which is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but it's raised in power. It's sown in natural body, but it's raised a spiritual body, one that's impervious to sin, one that's unsusceptible to the weaknesses and temptations of sin.

With sin thus removed, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is. That is to say, in other words, that which impedes our vision currently is the presence of our sin nature. The weakness of our sin-cursed body, the body of sin,

which is subject to decay, but when he returns, that blessed transformation occurs, instantly we shall be like him. Beloved, the fulfillment of that promise of future of glorification, it is inevitable. It is going to happen. This is Gospel truth. You can bank on it, bet your life on it. Its fulfillment is guaranteed by the word of the unchanging God.

As the Apostle Paul, again he's written by the Holy Spirit, Romans 8:22 and following, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have first fruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that's seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

We come to a sixth and final benefit of abiding in Christ. Number six: Abiding in Christ means continual sanctification. Abiding in Christ means continual sanctification. Our first point was about continual life, continual vivification. And that

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continual vivification will not leave us unaffected. It cannot. All those who belong to God, they are progressively, continually sanctified, made holy. Praise be to God for that. Take a look at verse 3, "Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself just as he is pure."

That word, purifies, it's a ceremonial ritual cleansing kind of a term that, that speaks of the cleansing, the full washing, that must, you must go through, the high priest would go through before entering the holy place. But here, it's spoken of, since we have a high priest, who's past through the Holy of Holies, past the veil into the Holy of Holies and right now he's seated at the right hand of God. Not in the types made by the hand of man in the temple in Jerusalem, but in the eternal place, in heaven. He's passed through. And in him we pass through.

And so what remains is not for us to be ritually, ceremonially pure, but that type points us to the reality of a moral purification, becoming purified, like he is pure and holy. Biblically, hope is, is absolute certainty. It's the certainty

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of what we truly long for and that what we truly long for will certainly be fulfilled. That's hope. So if we long for glorification, if we long for the utter banishment of sin from our lives and for continuous unbroken perfection, of fellowship with him, of righteousness in our lives, then we strive for that now, don't we?

I really doubt a person who tells me that they long for purification and holiness when they don't strive for it now. I doubt that. Some Christians, though, who are fighting for holiness, they feel discouraged in their fight for purity, for holiness, for spiritual growth. I know. It seems hard now sometimes in this temporal life and existence to think and speak and act righteously. Sometimes the Christian life can feel like we're, we're running through a marsh, right? You kind of just feel like you're getting stuck and bogged down and you got, trying to make. It's like one step forward, two steps backward.

But for those who are in Christ, for those who are abiding Christ, that feeling is really not a good indication of the facts, the reality. I should say that feelings are rarely a good

indicator of reality. We need to base our feelings on settled conviction, which is informed by the absolute truth of God's unchanging Word. Don't go with feelings. Go with facts. We need to believe the word of the Holy Spirit. And he is the one who has told us in Philippians 2:13 that, "it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." And therefore, we know that the God "who began a good work in you," Philippians 1:6, he's the one who will "bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus."

So since we have such a rock-solid promise, we have every reason not to be discouraged, right? But instead, to keep pressing forward, to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because it's God who is at work within you both to will and to do for his good pleasure. If he's guaranteeing the outcome, well, let's get busy. Let's work. Let's press on, right? Let's be aggressive about growth, aggressive about holiness in our lives. Let's press on to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

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Look, when you abide in Christ, when his Word abides in you, that life-giving Word will be the vitality flowing through your life changing, sanctifying you. You'll find within yourself the strengthening of holy affections, love for purity and truth, hatred of all that offends God. You'll find the things of this world growing strangely dim, especially as you see the clarity of God's character and purpose of Christ. When all that comes into sharp focus, you'll give yourself completely to truth and purity and holiness. The love of the Father, the love the saints.

So beloved, abide in Christ. Stay in his Word. Let his Word stay in you. To do that means you mortify sin. You abandon it. You let go of it. You leave it very far behind in order that you might have hands open and free that you can grasp the glorious truths of God, the promises of Christ and his Word, that you can hold those firmly. As John Bunyan said, "Sin will keep you from this book and this book will keep you from sin."

If you abide in Christ and his Word, if his Word is at home in your heart, abiding in him means continual vivification,

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relational conviction, spiritual regeneration, familial identification. It means inevitable glorification. And it means continual sanctification. I hope you find those truths encouraging, and heartening and edifying, especially as we enter into a joyful holiday season. Let's pray.

Father, we want to thank you again for our Lord Jesus Christ. The one the commands our conscience and our obedience in order that we may be brought into divine joy. We love you and thank you for Him. We ask that you would encourage our hearts, strengthen our confidence and assurance in you. Help us all to be motivated to great devotion to you and obedience to Christ. In His name we pray.